

Recognise the early warning signs of stroke

National Stroke Week commenced on Monday 18 September 2006, and Ambulance is urging the community not to ignore the symptoms of stroke or down play their significance. Early detection is vital, and getting treatment within the first few hours reduces morbidity and mortality of patients who have suffered a stroke. Ambulance officers attend to many people suffering from stroke and often witness the devastating after-effects.

A stroke may occur with any one, or a combination of the following:

- Weakness or numbness or paralysis of the face, arm or leg on either or both sides of the body
- Difficulty speaking or understanding
- Dizziness, loss of balance or unexplained falls
- Loss of vision, sudden blurred or decreased vision in one or both eyes
- Headache, usually severe and of abrupt onset or unexplained change in the pattern of headaches
- Difficulty swallowing

If you experience any of these symptoms yourself or recognise them in someone else, dial '000' and ask for Ambulance, even if the symptoms last for only a short time. There is clear evidence that early treatment greatly reduces the death rate and longer-term effects for survivors.

For more information you can visit the National Stroke Foundation Website at: www.nationalstrokefoundation.com.au or telephone: 1800 787 653